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HELP
YOU
BUY
PAY LESS
MORE
FOOD

ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS

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WHAT IS THE FOODSTAMP PROGRAM?

Administered by the Illinois Department of Public Aid the USDA Food Stamp Program provides an effective means of improving the quality and quantity of the diets of low-income households. USDA pays 50% of all administrative costs and provides the coupons to the state.

Food stamps are used instead of cash to pay for food at grocery stores. They can be used to pay for meals provided by Meals-on-Wheels, a communal dining facility or a drug addiction or alcoholic rehabilitation center.

WHO CAN GET FOOD STAMPS?

Many low-income households qualify for food stamps. A "household" is defined as a group of people living together who buy and cook their food together and share their income and expenses. While most households are comprised of families, other groups of individuals can also constitute a household.



NOTE: Most Supplemental Security Income and public assistance households are eligible for the Food Stamp Program regardless of the income and resource standards.

ARE THERE ANY PEOPLE WHO CAN'T GET FOOD STAMPS?

Yes. Ineligible persons include: roomers, boarders, illegal aliens, live-in attendants, people in group care facilities and students living away from home (if considered as tax dependents by households whose income and resources are too high to qualify for food stamps).

WHAT IS INCOME? WILL ALL OF IT BE COUNTED?

Monthly income is the total money received from employment, training programs, self-employment, roomers/boarders, annuities, scholarships, public assistance, support and/or alimony payments, etc. that is received or is anticipated to be received in a household during the certification period.

Food stamp monthly net incomes are calculated by deducting 10% of total gross earned income and training allowance for all household members or \$30 (whichever is less) plus all payroll taxes and union dues; medical bills; necessary child care fees; educational expenses for tuition and required fees; and shelter costs (rent or mortgage payments plus utilities and telephone) that add up to more than 30% of income after deductions. Money earned by a student under 18 and loans (except educational loans) will not be counted.

HOW MUCH INCOME CAN YOU HAVE?

The chart below shows the maximum food stamp monthly net income - (gross income minus allowable deduction) for each household size:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE		MONTHLY INCOME
One	.....	\$ 262
Two	.....	344
Three	.....	460
Four	.....	580
Five	.....	687
Six	.....	827
Seven	.....	913
Eight	.....	1047

(NOTE: \$133 should be added for each additional person.)

WHAT ARE RESOURCES AND HOW MANY CAN YOU HAVE?

Resources include checking and savings accounts, United States Savings Bonds, stocks and bonds and non-liquid assets (such as buildings, land, and certain real or personal property). The home, one vehicle and certain other resources (i.e., personal belongings, household goods, life insurance policies and pension funds) are not counted. Other resources will be counted at their fair market value less what is still owed. Each household can have up to \$1,500 in resources and still qualify for food stamps. Households with two or more people can keep \$3,000 if one person is 60 or over.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER REQUIREMENTS?

Yes. Some household members may have to sign up for work with the state employment service. This doesn't apply for persons already working or those unable to work. Students, dependents under 18, persons over 65, home bound persons and those who care for them are also excluded.

HOW MANY STAMPS WILL YOU GET?

The total amount of food stamps you get each month is called the “monthly coupon allotment”. Each household of the same size is entitled to the same monthly coupon allotment. The chart below shows the coupon allotment for each household size:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE		COUPON ALLOTMENT
One	.....	\$ 52
Two	.....	96
Three	.....	138
Four	.....	174
Five	.....	206
Six	.....	248
Seven	.....	274
Eight	.....	314

(NOTE: \$40 should be added for each additional person.)

The coupon allotments and the maximum monthly wage allowed to qualify for food stamps may increase every January and July to reflect rising food prices.

HOW MUCH WILL YOU PAY FOR YOUR STAMPS?

Households with one or two persons whose income after deductions is less than \$20 will receive their monthly coupon allotments free. Households with three or more persons whose income is less than \$30 will receive their monthly coupon allotments free. The coupons will always be worth more than their purchase price.

A household is allowed to purchase three-quarters, one-half or one-quarter of the total allotment. Once each household has decided how many of its allocated coupons to purchase, no change can be made during that month. However, the full allotment may be purchased the following month. (Contact your caseworker for details.)

HOW SHOULD THE HOUSEHOLD APPLY FOR FOOD STAMPS?

Anyone will be given a food stamp application form upon request. These applications may be submitted to the local certification office at any time.

Upon submission of the application form, if the applicant indicates there is an immediate need for food stamps, the household's need will be evaluated that same day or the following working day. If the local certification office determines that immediate need exists, an interview will be conducted and a decision made on eligibility. If the household is determined eligible, benefits must be authorized within two working days following this decision. If it is determined that immediate need DOES NOT EXIST, an appointment will be given for an interview. Proof of all income in the household, paid bills and receipts of expenses should be brought to the interviewer. In addition proof of saving and/or checking accounts may be required.

RIGHT TO A FAIR HEARING

Any household which feels the local certification office has made an incorrect decision on the household's food stamp application or an incorrect decision on the amount of food stamp benefits or has failed to take action on the household's application within a 30-day period of time, has a right to request a fair hearing. Appeal forms for a fair hearing are available at any food stamp office.

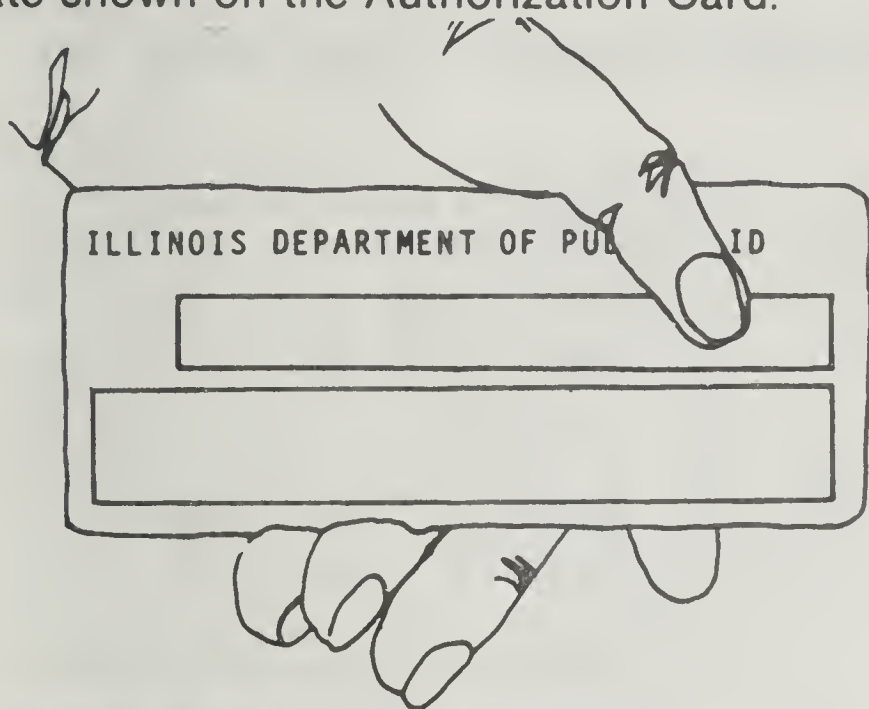
HOW TO USE THE FOOD STAMP CARDS

Individual households regularly enrolled in the Food Stamp Program will receive a Food Stamp Authorization to Purchase Card(s).

The amount of money required for the stamps is shown in the box marked "you must pay" on the right-hand side of the cards. This box also shows the amount of bonus stamps and total amount of stamps allocated.

Each regularly enrolled household will receive a wallet-sized identification card. This card may be valid up to a year, depending upon the expiration date listed on each card.

The ID card is valid only when it has been signed. However, the Authorization Card (right-hand side) should not be signed until the stamps are actually purchased. All food stamps must be bought on or before the expiration date shown on the Authorization Card.



HOW TO BUY FOOD STAMPS

Households receiving the regular blue Authorization to Purchase Cards must take the entire form along when stamps are purchased. Certain local currency exchanges, post offices, or banks sell food stamps in each county. The right-hand side of all authorization cards must be signed in the presence of the person who sells the stamps.

Persons receiving special pink Authorization to Purchase Cards and temporary identification cards, should present both when buying food stamps.

Each household is required to have its identification card for every purchase of food stamps.

General Assistance recipients may receive a special GA Food Stamp Check, WHICH CAN BE USED ONLY TO BUY FOOD STAMPS. It may be necessary to supplement the check with cash to purchase monthly coupon allotments.

Food stamps are sold in books of \$65, \$50, \$40, \$7 and \$2. The stamps in the books are three different colors: brown for the one dollar stamps, purple for the five dollar stamps and blue-green for the ten dollar stamps.

The books themselves are green for the \$2 book, purple for the \$7 book, gold-brown for the \$40 book, blue for the \$50 book and reddish-brown for the \$65 book.

Each household should receive the exact amount in food stamp books that was shown on the authorization form. Before each book is used, it should be signed on the back of the front cover.

Any damaged books should be returned immediately to the local Department of Public Aid office for replacement. Incidents of lost or stolen stamps should be reported to case-workers as soon as possible.

Food stamps may be purchased by someone other than the person who qualifies as head of household. However, in this case, a "proxy" must fill in the information on the back side of the authorization form along with the qualified user. All GA Food Stamp Checks should be endorsed. Then the "proxy" will take both the GA Food Stamp Check and the Authorization Form to buy stamps.

If necessary, food stamps may be purchased by mail. The authorization form should be signed in the proper place and sent with a money order to the Mail Order Sales Office, Post Office Box 939, Springfield, Illinois 62705. The money order should be made payable to the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S.D.A.

GA Food Stamp Checks used to buy stamps by mail must be endorsed and sent with the signed authorization form to the above mentioned address. If this check is not large enough to buy stamps, an additional money order may be required. **NO PERSONAL CHECKS OR CASH SHOULD BE SENT.**

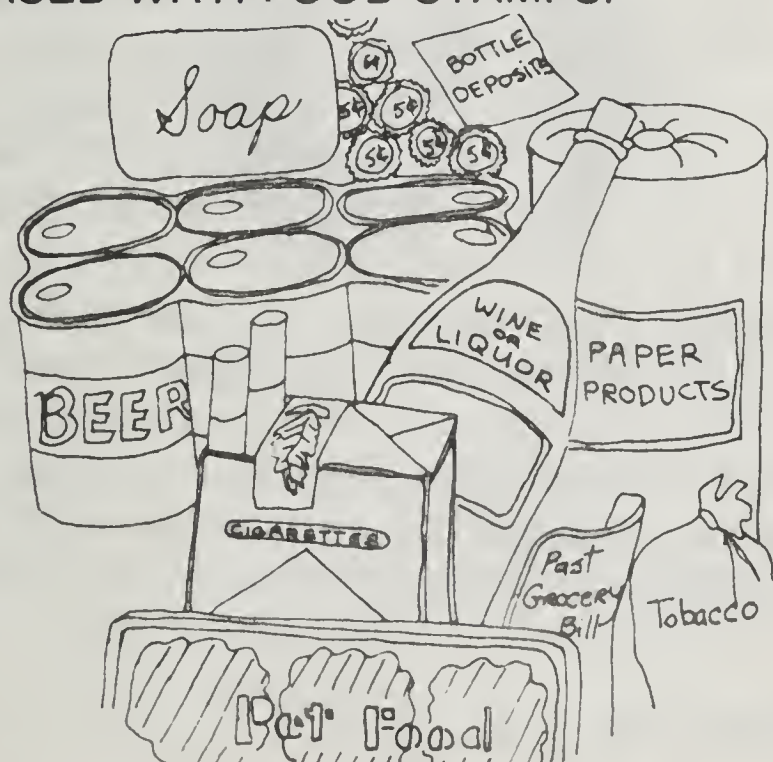
All checks and authorization cards must be received at Mail Order Sales Office before the expiration date shown on the form.



HOW TO BUY FOOD WITH FOOD STAMPS

Identification cards are necessary to buy food with food stamps. Stamps should not be removed from the stamp books until they are used to actually purchase food at the check-out counter. Change will not be given for food stamps; instead, the cashier will give a credit slip for any change of 99 cents or less.

Items such as alcohol, tobacco, pet foods, soap, paper products, and household supplies may not be purchased. However, seeds and plants for home gardens in which food for the household is produced are excepted. Bottle deposits cannot be paid for with stamps, nor can old food bills be settled with food stamps. **THERE IS NO SALES TAX ON ITEMS PURCHASED WITH FOOD STAMPS.**



A "proxy" may purchase food for an eligible household with the household's stamps. In this case the "proxy" must also complete the back side of the identification card. The "proxy" must take the identification card to the store when buying the food.

RECIPIENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Food stamps may not be sold, exchanged or misused in any way. Violations may result in imprisonment and fines of up to \$10,000.

Any change in household circumstances must be reported within 10 days. These include: changes in household composition; change of address; change in work status; receipt of lump-sum money or change in gross income or allowable deductions of more than \$25. These changes may affect food stamp eligibility or the purchase price. Applicants have the responsibility of providing verification when needed or give permission to obtain verification.

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES:

Applications for food stamps must be given to anyone upon request and accepted from any person who wishes to make application.

Applications must be processed, applicants interviewed and notified of the decision within 30 days from the agency's receipt of a signed application containing a legible name and address.

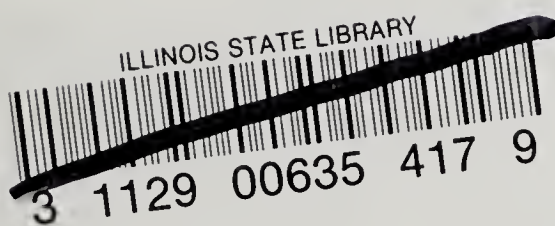
A 10-day Notice of Adverse Action must be sent to the participant household prior to any action to reduce or cancel benefits.

The agency must provide the opportunity and assistance to any household that requests a fair hearing and review.

The standards for participation in the Food Stamp Program are the same for everyone without regard to race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, handicap or political beliefs.

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**YOU CAN GET AN APPLICATION FORM BY
CALLING OR GOING TO:**

Local Office Stamp



**ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AID**

316 South Second Street
Springfield, Illinois 62762